

The Sunday School

LESSON 4—JULY 22, 1900

Peter's Confession and Christ's Rebuke.—Matt. 16:13-26.

Golden Text.—If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross, and follow me.—Matt. 16:24.

Lesson Thought.—It is vitally important that we have proper conceptions of Jesus the Christ.

Time—A few weeks after the last lesson, in the autumn of A. D. 29

Place.—On the way from the Sea of Galilee to Caesarea Philippi.

Persons—Last half of the third year of Christ's ministry.

Home Readings

See Harmony of the Gospels for intervening events; Matt. 16:13-28; John 6:66-71; I John 4:16; I Peter 2:1-10; Phil. 2:11-22; Phil. 3:1-11.

Lesson Links

Jesus had fed the five thousand, crossed the sea, taught the seeking multitudes concerning the true Bread of Life and then, when the disciples left Him, went with the faithful twelve into the regions of Tyre and Sidon. There he healed the daughter of the Syrophenician woman. After a short stay in those parts he made a circuit east and south to the country of the Ten Cities, Decapolis, south east and east of the Sea of Galilee. There he fed the four thousand, refused to give any sign but Jonah's sign to the Pharisees and with his disciples crossed the sea north to its northern end. Thence the journey began to Caesarea Philippi.

Lesson Story

There away in the north of Palestine, under the shadows of Mt. Hermon on which he would in six days be transfigured before the inner circle of the disciples, Jesus asked the disciples whom men said he was. And they replied that some said he was John the Baptist, some, Elias, and others, that he was one of the old Jewish prophets. All these the people in their superstition expected would come to life again in this Messianic age. The one point in this reply is that the people did not believe Jesus was the Messiah. They had once thought he was, but since he refused to be made king, and since he refused to give them a sign from heaven they judged they were mistaken. And yet the spell of His power was upon them so that they credited him as one of the great ones of the past come to life.

Jesus is not always what people think him. He often disappoints men. He is so much greater than they think.

What is Christ to You?

With suddenness turning from their reply to the disciples themselves, Jesus earnestly asked, "But whom say *you*—you that have followed me these years,—that I am." And Peter, forward as always, but now with a true conception of Christ revealed to him from heaven said, "Thou art the Christ, i. e., the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

The events of the last few weeks had

opened the eyes of Peter to the fact that Jesus tho not the Messiah that the Jews expected, was, nevertheless, the real Messiah. It was the great confession and Jesus honored him who made it.

The Church and the Rock

Jesus said to Peter, "Thou art Peter (a stone), you have not learned this yourself. My father in heaven revealed it unto you. On this *rock* (not stone), i. e., the insight and faith and confession of Peter,—the things that made Peter believe in Christ as the Messiah in spite of the fact that he was different from the Messiah expected,—on this rock I will build my church: and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. It now looks as tho it would fail, that death would be its end. But on this understanding—this rock—this insight into the spiritual power of my church, which makes it possible for you, Peter, to make this confession, stands the hope of my church. And Peter, unto thee will I give the right to open the kingdom of heaven to the Gentiles. You first shall have the privilege of knowing that this is for Gentiles as well as Jews. (See Acts 11:15-18). And whatever you prohibit (bind) on earth shall be prohibited in heaven: whatsoever you allow (loose) on earth shall be allowed in heaven. But it is all given because of spiritual understanding and will be given to others also, when they understand also." These words of Jesus spoken to a man who first caught a glimpse of the real nature of the kingdom of heaven, are no warrant for the assumptions of Catholics, that Jesus gave this same power to none but Peter. (See Matt. 18:18.) There is no warrant for the assumption that the Popes are the spiritual successors of Peter. Nor is there evidence that Peter was ever bishop of Rome.

Silence Enjoined

Jesus now strictly charged the disciples that they should tell no one that he was the Messiah. There would be time for that after the crucifixion. Now it would only hinder His work.

Further Revelation

Jesus now began to teach the disciples the great mystery of his life,—his suffering and death and that at the hands of the very people he came to save. Even the disciples,—yea, even Peter,—had never dreamed that Jesus was a Messiah that must win by dying, succeed thru apparent failure. This Jesus began to teach them. It was the next step in their training.

Peter's Rebuke of Christ

Peter's good reputation for understanding the mind of Jesus was soon to be spoiled. He heard Jesus telling about the coming tragedy. And, perhaps, thinking that Jesus was a little despondent, took Him aside and began to rebuke the Master, saying, "Be it far from thee; this shall not happen to you. It cannot. It must not. The people would not kill you. And even if they would we should not allow it."

Christ's Rebuke of Peter

Christ can censure as well as praise. This disciple must be rebuked. So Christ turned upon Peter and with his clear eye piercing Peter thru and thru, he said, "Get behind me satan. Satan is using you, Peter, as a tool. You are a stumbling block to me. You think to befriend me. But physical suffering is far better than to be untrue to conscience. And I know that my course will cause my death. You do not mind the things of God, but of men."

The Daily Cross

Then turning to all the disciples, with sadness in his heart because of their dullness, Jesus spake the truest words ever spoken by man, the practical law of discipleship, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whosoever would save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what shall a man be profited if he shall gain the whole world and by so doing, do wrong, kill conscience and lose his own life? Or, what shall a man give in exchange for his life?" It is the most valuable thing he has. How idly men throw it away!

Lesson Applied

1. Be careful not to limit Christ to your idea of what Christ should be. He is greater than most of us think.
2. What the world thinks of Christ is not so important.
3. But be sure *you* think of Him correctly.
4. Peter confessing Christ was a stone in place and helped to build the church; Peter rebuking Christ was a stone out of place—an instrument of satan and destruction.
5. The Great Confession is still great (Rom. 10:9) but it is now possible for us all to make. Have you made it, friend?
6. Those who understand the laws of Christ's kingdom have power,—to bind and loose.
7. Let us be sure we are not stumbling blocks to Christ.
8. "There is a cross for every one, And there's a cross for me."
9. Some men lose their lives in a horse trade, some selling sugar, some selling potatoes, corn, etc., and some in getting a job.

J. L. GILLIN.

A YEAR OF EXTRAORDINARY SUCCESS

W. A. HILLIS

The missionary work of the American Sunday School Union in the year closing February, 1900, was attended with most remarkable enlargement and success. Not only were the labors of the missionaries crowned with abundant blessings from God, but new plans for efficient work were carried into operation and many new friends enlisted in support of the Society.

The amount received for the support of the missionary work was \$131,796, against \$121,018 for the previous year.

There have been in the field 192 men employed, of whom 102 were at work during the whole year and 90 purging a portion of the year. Those serving part of the year labored 419 months, or nearly 35 full years, making all equal to a full year's work for 137